



Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

Network Director's Update

October 2011



National News: *(Click on titles to read full press release)*

[VA Updates Information Sharing Rule with DOD](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it is amending an agency rule in the Code of Federal Register (C.F.R.) to remove an inappropriate restriction on sharing of information about treatment for certain types of medical conditions with the Department of Defense (DOD). This update to the regulation removes the restrictive VA provision and enhances VA's collaboration with DOD so Veterans can receive better and timelier treatment, services and benefits. (10/26/11)

[VA Announces Winner of "Blue Button for All Americans" Contest](#) - RelayHealth, McKesson's connectivity business, has been named the winner of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) "Blue Button for All Americans" contest. (10/25/11)

[Draft Gulf War Task Force Report Is Released](#) - Today, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced that the Department's Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Task Force has completed the draft of a comprehensive report that will outline how the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) addresses the concerns of Veterans who deployed during the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991. (10/21/11)

[VA Awards \\$7.5 Million to U.S Olympic Committee](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs awarded \$7.5 million to the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) to provide recreation and sport activities for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces. (10/19/11)

[VA Announces Winners of 2011 Employee Innovation Competition](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced six winners of the 2011 Veterans Affairs Innovation Initiative (VAi2) Employee Innovation Competition. The competition sought ideas from employees to help Veterans with disabilities related to their military service obtain meaningful employment. VA will develop, test, and potentially implement winning ideas for nationwide use in VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program. (10/18/11)

[Vets Reveal Creative Talents in Fayette, Ark.](#) - More than 100 talented Veterans from across the Nation will attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Fayetteville, Ark., Oct. 17 - 23, showcasing their winning

[VA Announces PSA About Women Veterans](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs is taking its internal culture-change message to the public with a new video about the vital role women play in the military and the importance of providing women Veterans with high quality health care. (10/13/11)

[VA Launches Outreach Campaign to Eliminate Homelessness Among Veterans](#) - As part of its drive to end homelessness among Veterans by 2015, the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching a nation-wide outreach initiative, "Make the Call," to spread the message about its special programs to help homeless Veterans and their families to 28 communities across the nation in October. (10/12/11)

[VA to Build Polytrauma-Blind Rehabilitation Center in Palo Alto](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs has awarded a \$98.8 million contract to build a new rehabilitation facility located on the campus of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. (10/11/11)

[VA Debuts Documentary Highlighting Heroes, Polytrauma System of Care](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a campaign to increase awareness about Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and services provided by the VA for Veterans and Servicemembers recovering from TBI and co-occurring complex injuries. (10/7/11)

[Secretary Shinseki Announces an Additional \\$10.3 Million to Help Eliminate Veterans Homelessness](#) - Eleven states will share more than \$10.3 million in grants to community groups to provide enhanced services for homeless Veterans this year. This is in addition to the \$59.5 million in preventive grants awarded earlier this year. (10/5/11)

VISN 19:

Veterans' Homelessness Getting Local Touch VA Programs Held in 28 Communities

As part of its national drive to end homelessness among Veterans by 2015, the Department of Veterans Affairs took the message about its special programs to help homeless Veterans and their families to 28 communities this fall.



Two communities in VISN 19 (VAECHCS and VAMTHCS) hosted special programs in October highlighting local services for homeless Veterans, their families and those at risk of becoming homeless. The programs highlighted partnerships in state and local government, the non-profit and the private sectors.

This fiscal year, VA expects to spend \$3.4 billion to provide health care to homeless Veterans and \$800 million in specialized homeless programs. The latest studies say more than 75,000 Veterans are homeless on a typical night, and about 135,000 spend at least one night a year in a homeless shelter.

Since March 2010, VA has offered a toll-free telephone number, staffed around the clock by trained professionals, to help homeless Veterans, their families and at-risk people. The number is 877-4AID-VET (or 877-424-3838).

Recently, VA has transformed its efforts in the fight against homelessness. It is changing from a program focus upon temporary, shelter-based services, to prevention, employment, permanent housing, and help to families and Veterans at risk of becoming homeless.

More information about VA's programs for homeless Veterans, at-risk Veterans and their families is available at www.va.gov/homeless.

VISN 19 staff participate in New Program to Serve Veterans Living Abroad

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has instituted a new program to provide comprehensive compensation and pension (C&P) examinations to U.S. Veterans living overseas.

In June, VA staff traveled to Camp Lester in Okinawa, Japan, to join with members of the Department of Defense in providing C&P exams to Veterans. Over the course of their three week trip, the team completed 247 examinations on 39 Veterans.

Due to the success of the pilot program, a return visit was held Sept. 19-30. A nurse practitioner from the Cheyenne VAMC C&P Nurse practitioner volunteered to be a member of the team for the second trip. Her participation was invaluable as VA practitioners are more familiar with VA protocols and requirements to provide the Veterans' examinations.

VA's C&P examination program includes providing a medical assessment to evaluate Veterans' current disabilities that may be related to their military service. If VA has previously determined a Veteran has a service-connected medical condition, the examination helps determine the current severity of the condition, which could affect the amount of VA disability compensation payable or entitlement to additional benefits. One Veteran can require separate examinations for various conditions. On aver-

age, Veterans receive four examinations during the VA C&P process.

In addition, VA is conducting its first international C&P examination in Okinawa using telehealth technology. To date, six Veterans have participated in remote C&P examinations between VA's National Telemental Health Center location and the U.S. Naval Hospital in Okinawa. VA is using telehealth technology to reduce the number of Veterans awaiting examinations overseas and to ease their burden of travel.

VA plans to explore other opportunities to provide similar services to additional destinations in Europe and Asia where U.S. Veterans live.

Eastern Colorado Health Care System



Denver, CO – Replacement Medical Center Facility

The Denver VAMC (parent Eastern Colorado Health Care System) provides monthly updates on the status of the Denver Replacement Hospital. Updates are distributed via e-mail monthly and can be found on www.denver.va.gov or on Facebook WWW.facebook.com/denverva. Also check out our new brochure [here](#) or at www.denver.va.gov/projecteagle.

Department of Veterans Affairs Awards Lease for Homeless Veteran Domiciliary Program

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS) has awarded West Second Street Associates a 10-year lease to build and house Valor Point, a 40-bed Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) site.

Valor Point, scheduled to open in May 2012, will be located at 7350 W. Eastman Place, Lakewood, Colorado. The site offers 3.64 acres of land in a park-like setting and includes a 26,000 square foot existing building which will be renovated to meet the needs of Valor Point.

Denver is one of five locations nationwide to receive VA funding for construction of a new DCHV as part of VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki's 5 year plan to eliminate homelessness among Veterans. Valor Point will identify homeless and at-risk Veterans who need residential treatment to overcome barriers to housing and provide them with transitional, recovery-focused treatment that increases their independent living skills so that they can obtain and maintain housing upon graduation.

Services for Veterans in the treatment program will include psychosocial rehabilitation, mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, vocational counseling, and medical care. Residents of Valor Point are likely to stay for four to six months in the domiciliary, after which, they will transition to independent housing.

West Second Street Associates, founded in 1993, is a Michigan based Limited Liability Company that specializes in real estate development and long-term management of high quality General Services Administration buildings throughout the United States.

Denver VA Medical Center Program Wins Prestigious Award - Virtual ICU Receives One of the Top 10 Office of Nursing Services Innovations Awards

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS) Virtual Intensive Care Unit (vICU) has been selected as one of the Top 10 VA Office of Nursing Services Innovations Awards for 2011.

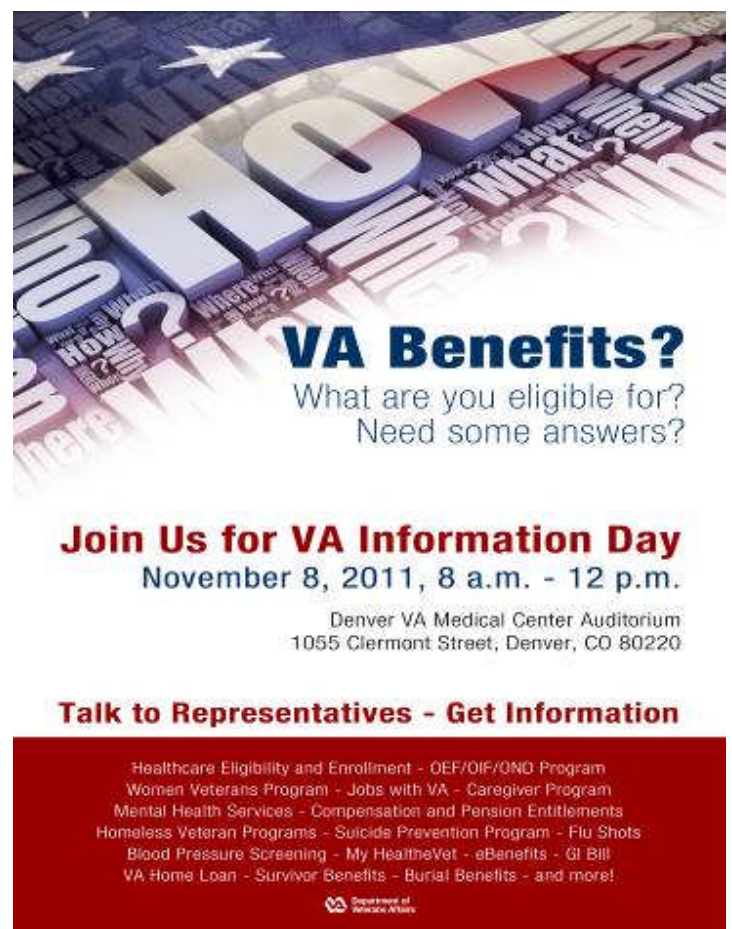
Several entries were submitted from across the Nation utilizing this year's theme, ***Achieving Patient-Driven Care through Highly Functioning Teams***. All submissions described creative and valuable programs or initiatives led by VA nurses. However, the ECHCS submission was among the Top 10 featured as "best of the best".

The Denver VA Medical Center vICU telehealth program provides outlying VA facilities immediate access to consults by ICU providers at the Denver VAMC through telemedicine. Through this program, a patient at a rural location can be seen by the ICU staff at the Denver VA for immediate evaluation of a potentially serious medical issue. The program is available to rural communities throughout the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 19 which includes Colorado, Montana, Utah and Wyoming.

Developed as part of VA's rural health initiative, the model is extremely unique because it is nurse driven. A critical care certified nurse (CCRN) manages the system and is available 24/7 for immediate rapid response collaboration, consultation, and support.

The program, the first of its kind in the VA system, has exceeded expectations for Carrie Hawkins, the vICU coordinator and assistant nurse manager of critical care at the Denver VAMC. "Our model is very proactive," said Hawkins, RN, BSN, CCRN, "It's all about supporting our colleagues around VISN 19 and giving them the tools they need to succeed while providing care to the Veteran. We are enhancing care at the rural sites and strengthening and unifying multi-disciplinary team building across all of VISN 19."

The award is confirmation of the success of the program for the providers who operate it and for the rural Veterans who now have access to top quality critical care.



VA Benefits?
What are you eligible for?
Need some answers?

Join Us for VA Information Day
November 8, 2011, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Denver VA Medical Center Auditorium
1055 Clermont Street, Denver, CO 80220

Talk to Representatives - Get Information

Healthcare Eligibility and Enrollment - OEF/OIF/OND Program
Women Veterans Program - Jobs with VA - Caregiver Program
Mental Health Services - Compensation and Pension Entitlements
Homeless Veteran Programs - Suicide Prevention Program - Flu Shots
Blood Pressure Screening - My HealtheVet - eBenefits - GI Bill
VA Home Loan - Survivor Benefits - Burial Benefits - and more!

Department of Veterans Affairs

VAECHCS hosting "VA Information Day"

VA has made remarkable strides in reaching out to Vets and making sure they know about (and have easy access to) the benefits they've earned. The VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System is dedicated to continuing that cause.

On **November 8, 2011 from 8am-noon** and coinciding with Veterans Day, ECHCS will be hosting a **VA Information Day** in the **Denver VA Medical Center auditorium**.

The event is an opportunity for **any Veteran** to come to the Medical Center and find information about (and assistance applying for) **any VA benefit** they may be entitled to. We will have high level representatives and information on; Healthcare Eligibility and Enrollment, Women Veterans Program, Jobs with VA, Mental Health Services, Compensation and Pension, Homeless Veteran Programs, Suicide Prevention Program, GI Bill, VA Home Loan, Survivor Benefits, Burial Benefits and much more.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend!

Denver VAMC Flu Shot Clinic for Veterans

A Flu Shot Clinic for Veterans is being held at the Denver VA Medical Center, 1055 Clermont Street, Denver CO on Monday through Thursday from 7am-9am in the Garage Atrium, 10am-2pm in the Main Atrium and 3pm-5pm in Garage Atrium. The Clinics will continue through Wednesday, November 23. The Clinics will be closed on Monday 10/10/11 for Columbus Day.

Please be sure to wear a short sleeved shirt and bring VA ID card.

Grand Junction VAMC



GJVAMC "Pink Out" Ceremony

On October 19, 2011, the Grand Junction VAMC gathered together to show support for Breast Cancer Awareness during their 2nd Annual "Pink Out". Employees participated in a contest for the title of the "Pinkest Employee".



The event was a great success with many employees and volunteers participating.

GJVAMC Homeless Standdown

On October 22, 2011, the Grand Junction VAMC held their Annual Veterans Stand Down at the First Congregational Church, 1425 N. 5th St.



Basic medical services, haircuts, VA Health Care registration, job search assistance, a hot meal, DOD civilian winter clothing and more were provided.



Celebrating the Navy's Birthday



On October 13, 2011 the Navy Veterans employed at the Grand Junction VAMC gathered together to serve cake and punch in honor of the Navy's 236th birthday.



VA Montana Health Care System:



Veterans Stand Down, homeless outreach campaign kickoff held in Billings

By Mike Molina

More than 200 Veterans and their families attended the Billings Veterans Stand Down and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Homeless Outreach Campaign kickoff at the Shrine Auditorium in Billings, Mont., on Oct. 11.

The event was hosted by Volunteers of America in coordination with VA Montana Health Care System. VA staff and more than 20 Veterans service providers were on hand offering services and assistance to Veterans, including information about employment, housing assistance, legal services, VA benefits, social security and



The Social Security Administration and other community agencies were also represented at the Standdown. Grand Valley Transit provided free rides for Veterans as well to help out. The event reached 127 Veterans.

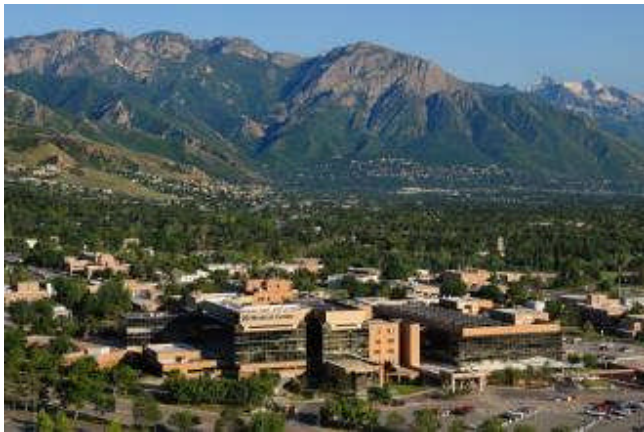
other programs. Medical staff will also provide free flu shots.

The Billings Stand Down also kicked off the VA's national outreach campaign to increase awareness of services available to Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming so. Veterans and VA officials discussed the importance of partnerships between local VA facilities, community organizations and other government agencies, as the VA continues toward the goal of ending homelessness among Veterans by 2015.

The VA launched simultaneous campaign kickoff events at 28 sites nationwide in October.

Last year, there were 196 Stand Downs held serving 44,325 Veterans and 7,695 family members of Veterans. More than 27,000 volunteers participated in stand down events.

VASLCHCS



Operation Baby Shower/VA Salt Lake City HCS

Two-month-old Aryana Diaz cried out, and her mother quickly comforted her with a bottle. It was an unusual sound and sight at the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center in Salt Lake City. But Aryana's mother, Kassie Diaz, is one of several military Veteran moms and expectant moms who enjoyed games and gifts at Operation Baby Shower.

Though Marine veteran, Diaz never thought of the VA for her pregnancy until they contacted her to tell her about her benefits and her services. She was surprised to learn the VA offers prenatal and maternity care. "They were awesome," Diaz said. "I didn't have to do anything."

More women serve in our military than ever before, and that's led to a lot of changes. Many of those veterans are mothers, so the VA has answered the call with services that surprise even the vets themselves.



A veteran of the Iraq War, Diaz was part of the initial assault on Baghdad. Today she's a civilian contractor flying military drones and has made three more trips to Iraq as a contractor.

Diaz says she felt an immediate bond with the staff at the VA. "It is a sense of trust, or brotherhood, or understanding each other," she said.

The babies and their moms are making themselves at home, and the Salt Lake City Women Veterans Clinic is growing to meet their specific needs.

Female soldiers have had maternity benefits since 1996, but VA medical centers across the country are now expanding to give them the services on site. "I started out and had no patients; and already this morning, I saw five in one day," said Dr. Susie Rose, who joined the VA two months ago as the first-ever staff OB-GYN.



"When I tell people I work at the VA, they kind of look at me and say, 'What? What are you doing? Those are old men, right?'" she Rose said. "And I say, 'No, there are tons of women in the military that are serving our country.'"

Army veteran Tammy New, who is pregnant with her first child, was also shocked to discover the prenatal services. When she first learned she was pregnant, she wasn't sure who she would see.

"Then, I got a letter in the mail that they were offering it here, and I was like, 'Oh wow!'", New recalled. "They've been great, everybody up here. They've been perfect."

Women now make up 15 percent of America's active and reserve troops. That's five times more than in World War II and double the number servicewomen involved in the Vietnam War. New says half of her basic training unit was female.

According to Diaz, the Marine Corps also knows how to utilize women in today's military. "Many women are finding a sense of accomplishment from being able to help and aid their country, just as men are today," she said.

Eleven thousand female vets live in Utah; only 3,000 use the VA. But that number keeps growing, and the VA hopes more women vets will turn to them for medical care.

Rose points out the female veterans also have some issues that may differ from the rest of the female population. At the VA, they can get prenatal care, lab services and mental health counseling specific to their experiences.

Expectant moms still get their ultrasounds and deliver their babies at area hospitals. But "the women really appreciate having more access to care here," Rose said.

It's their health care, but also a support group where they can share their unique experiences and needs.

VA SLC is so excited to have baby strollers in our Women's Clinic and pregnant female Veterans taking advantage of their maternity care benefits. Our Women's Clinic is growing and so are our programs. We've even welcomed our first ever female OB-GYN .

VASLCHCS CFC "Pie in the Face" Kick off Event

VASLCHCS leadership showed their support of the Combined Federal Campaign by agreeing to participate in the pie in the face kickoff event. Great fun was had by all!



Another supporting event was a chili cook off...also enjoyed by all during the start of the winter season.



VASLCHCS Support: PINK OUT for Breast Cancer!!



Though he wore combat boots and carried a weapon, Miller always had his guitar with him. "I am a singer song writer and a soldier." Said Miller as he was tuning up his guitar. "I toured even while I was in the military and won a few battle of the bands, but my heart was always back in the field with my buddies."

Though Miller is out of the military now, he sees how important it is for vets to get the help they may need from the VA. "I love the VA. They were there for me when I needed help and now I want to help guys get to the VA."

Miller has written several songs about his time in Iraq and coming home. He will be traveling to Coos Bay Oregon for the Regional Finals of the Texaco Country Music Showdown on November 19, 2011.

Cheyenne VAMC:



Cheyenne VA receives \$2.6 million award for Veterans' rural health programs

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced last week that Cheyenne VA Medical Center will be awarded \$2.6 million to be used in support of the Center's efforts to continue increasing access to care for Veteran's in the rural communities in the tri-state area. Cheyenne VA submitted several strategic proposals to the national program office in order to expand and sustain the medical center's rural health programs. Through this grant proposal process, the Cheyenne VA competed with dozens of other VA facilities across the country for the additional funds. VA's definition of "rural" communities is primarily based on low population density, a defining characteristic of the Cheyenne VA's patient service area.

Cheyenne VA Medical Center Director, Dr. Cynthia McCormack said, "Over the past three years, we have expanded the delivery of healthcare services to five communities in the tri-state region we serve. Combined with the state of the art, home tele-health devices and services we provide, hundreds of Veterans in the region



Sheridan VAMC:



Country Music singer, Alton Miller will be performing at the Sheridan VAMC Veterans Day event, November 11, 2011 at 11am. Miller is an OIF/OEF veteran who went back into the military after 9/11.

are now able to access health care faster.” Developments like these have increased the access to care as well as have established links to the health improvements of Veterans. McCormack says that the linkage of tele-health and healthcare quality is an outcome from the regular and preventative care of the rural health programs Cheyenne VA has implemented. McCormack also says the \$2.6 million award will be used to continue the center’s success in increasing VA care to rural communities as well as expand services through the deployment of new projects.

David Newman, Cheyenne VA’s tele-health program manager says that within VA healthcare system of over 800 national points of service, the Cheyenne VA is often viewed as a leader for tele-health in the VA system. “We have been very successful in developing and deploying high quality healthcare service to Veterans in smaller, rural communities. The technological advances of tele-health equipment that, when used in tandem with VA’s electronic medical record and secure network, allow VA to deliver high quality, comprehensive care to Veterans in almost any location.” Cheyenne VA’s tele-health program office has provided guidance and consultation to several other VA facilities in the development of their tele-health and mobile health programs.

Cheyenne VA will spend the \$2.6 million award to upgrade the existing mobile clinic, establish a home tele-health program for Veterans participating in mental health case management program, expand the Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) program in Cheyenne and increase services in at the outpatient clinic locations. Newman says these specific projects were selected through a strategic planning process which included analysis of current workload and projected demand, as well as from input from local Veteran groups.



VA Rocky Mountain Network 19 Network Director
Update is published monthly

4100 East Mississippi Avenue, Suite 1100
Glendale, CO 80246

303-756-9279
visn19.va.gov

Editor: Anita Urdiales